

# BHS NEWSLETTER

B L O O M I N G T O N H I S T O R I C A L S O C I E T Y

## *It's Our 60th Anniversary!*

Sixty years ago, in July 1964, the Bloomington Historical Society was incorporated and we officially began our mission to collect, preserve and share the history of Bloomington, Minnesota. Over the decades so many wonderful people have been actively involved in this all-volunteer organization. We owe everything to our volunteers and members!

On the incorporation documents are the signatures of Ken Veness, Stan Danielson and the late Larry Granger. Ken once again serves on our board of directors, and Stan stops in frequently. He is a wonderful resource and source of information about Bloomington.

The City Hall moved into a new Municipal Building on Penn and Old Shakopee Road in 1964. Old Town Hall was transformed into a Museum, run by the Historical Society volunteers. For many years it was open only on Sunday afternoons. Girl Scout Troops and Bloomington Garden Club members helped to greet visitors as docents. As the last farms in Bloomington were sold for development, many pieces of old equipment and household items found their way into the BHS collection.

Historical Society members gathered monthly to hear speakers on historical topics, or to tour other local history centers and historic sites. They held a pot-luck picnic in Moir Park each June. George Hopkins gathered information on Bloomington's own historic sites and compiled that information. It is now posted on our website.

Our nation's bicentennial in 1976 was a busy time. The Bloomington Historical Society members assisted in publishing a book, Bloomington on the Minnesota. Now affectionately called "The Green Book" it is still one of the best books on Bloomington History. Five walking or biking tours around Bloomington past the historic sites were also published. Most of those sites have been redeveloped now, and are just a memory.

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

Birthday Bash	2
Programs and Displays	2
Hopkins Ram	3

In 2007, after an amazing effort and fundraising spearheaded by Larry Granger and Vonda Kelley, the City of Bloomington restored the Old Town Hall to its 1892 look. What a difference! As part of that effort, the open hours at Old Town Hall increased and displays are updated in the new Civic Plaza five times per year.

Huge changes in 2019 came with the retirement of Larry and Vonda from the board of directors, and sudden closure of the museum just two months later from the COVID pandemic. A small group of volunteers persisted. The setback was used as an opportunity to reset all the museum displays, creating an inviting and welcoming place.

The future is bright as we celebrate 60 years. Be sure to join us at our Birthday Bash on Saturday, July 20, 2024. Activities will be happening at Old Town Hall from 10AM to 4PM that day. Cake at 12:30!

## VISIT US!

- Wednesday  
1-5 pm
- Thursday  
1-8 pm
- Saturday  
1-5 pm
- By appointment: call 952-881-4114 during open hours, or email bloomitarian@gmail.com to schedule your visit.

## 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday Bash

Big plans are being made to celebrate our 60th Anniversary. Mark your calendar and be sure to join in the fun. From 10AM to 4PM on Saturday, July 20th there will be activities going on at the Old Town Hall Museum, 10200 Penn Ave.

Talk with a Bloomington Historian and watch demonstrations of skills from the past. Themes from 1964 will abound including the ever-popular Bloomington Park & Rec game of Box Hockey, Met Stadium and WDGY radio. A new display section on Bloomington Vietnam Veterans will be opening. Weather permitting there will be some vintage cars on the lawn too.

Schedule: Opening remarks at 10AM. Birthday Cake will be served at 12:30 PM. Door prize drawing of a pair of tickets to B&B Theatre at Mall of America at 4PM.

## Programs and Displays

A new venture for BHS is researching and creating **traveling presentations** on Bloomington history. In January a presentation on **Bloomington Elementary Schools of the Past** was given at Creekside Center. In March a presentation on **Notable Bloomington Women** was given at a Federated Women's Club meeting. A presentation on **Bloomington Places of Worship** was made at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in April.

Upcoming presentations include **Bloomington and the Great War (WWI)** for the Men's Group at Presbyterian Homes on May 20th and **Beginning Your Genealogy Journey** at Creekside Center in August.

Our display on **early Bloomington schools** was moved and updated over the winter. Its now the first thing you see as you enter the Museum!

A display on **Marion Savage, the Savage mansion in Bloomington, and the racehorse Dan Patch** was at Civic Plaza earlier this year. The current display features **vintage camera equipment** from the Bloomington Historical Society collection. In late summer a display of **former Bloomington grocery stores** is being planned.

# THE HOPKINS RAM BY JIM GOODERMONT

If you have ever walked the trail that runs below the bluff from Old Lyndale going east, you probably have seen a small cement box along the trail which vandals have broken and kicked in. And, if you look to the south of the cement box, you will find a spring that gushes up out of the ground. That is just about all that is left of three generations of Hopkins that lived and farmed along the bluff above the spring.

The spring, with its cold clean water, is possibly why they located there in the 1860's. They came from Wolf Island, Canada, with several other families to settle in Bloomington, many of the families that came from Wolf Island, Canada, still live in Bloomington...the Harrisons, Kells and Chadwicks to name a few.

The Hopkins spring and ram (pump) supplied water to the farm for almost 100 years. The Hopkins, for two generations, farmed from Hopkins Road east to about 3rd Avenue, and from the Minnesota River north to about 107th Street. A row of cedars that ran east and west was their northern property line.

The Hopkins had a small herd of Jersey cows that they milked by hand and made into cottage cheese. They also grew strawberries, raspberries and black caps—sweet corn. They had a route in South Minneapolis where they sold fresh farm produce.

To the west was the Martin McLeod homestead, and to the east along the bluff was the Pond farm. The Ponds and Hopkins were related by marriage, as were many early Bloomington families.

On the Hopkins farm, history went back hundreds, even thousands of years. People lived above the bluff and wintered below the bluffs. The bluffs have a southern exposure, and shelter from the north-west wind in the winter. With the many springs, there are many old village sites in the valley.

One well-known site is at the end of Nicollet Avenue, at Wentworth and Spring Valley Drive. There was a very large Indian Mound, about 40 feet across and six feet high. To the south there was a trail down to the valley floor. To the east along the trail there is an old village site with a spring. The mound dates back about 900 years, and was destroyed in the late 1940s when Minnegasco ran a gas line down Nicollet Avenue and across the river to a storage tank.

On the farm was the site of old Victor Chattel's blacksmith shop. He was hired in the 1840s to do blacksmith work for the Dakotas. There was a very large Dakota village at the end of Lyndale Avenue and the Minnesota River. That village site is many generations old.

In the late 1960s, Lee and Joe Hopkins were not able to continue farming because the Bloomington City Council raised the taxes on their land. It was sold to build houses. In the 1970s the same thing happened to my Uncle George and Aunt Dorothy Hopkins.

Bloomington Historical Society  
1800 West Old Shakopee Road  
Bloomington, MN 55431



Photo by Steve Johnson

## **B L O O M I N G T O N H I S T O R I C A L   S O C I E T Y**

*Mailing address:*

1800 West Old Shakopee Road  
Bloomington, Minnesota 55431

*Phone:* 952-881-4114 (during open hours)

*Email:* [bloomitarian@gmail.com](mailto:bloomitarian@gmail.com)

*Facebook:* [BloomingtonMNHistoricalSociety](https://www.facebook.com/BloomingtonMNHistoricalSociety)

Founded in 1964, the Bloomington Historical Society is dedicated to the discovery, preservation and dissemination of knowledge about the City of Bloomington.

Our mission is to collect, preserve and hold in the public trust the many artifacts, photographic images, memorabilia and life stories of the people who have lived in Bloomington.

The organization is run entirely by volunteers and we depend entirely upon your donations for our operations, programs and displays. We are grateful for your ongoing support. Our current open hours at the Old Town Hall Museum are: Wednesdays and Saturdays 1-5 PM, Thursdays 1-8 PM. We look forward to having you visit.